(vi) The Central Pollution Control Board is imparting environmental education and training in the area of pollution control.

(vii) A number of documentaries and films have been financed by the Ministry of Environment and Forests educating the general public for taking measures to protect the environment and control pollution. These documentaries / films are shown in Doordarshan and other channels.

Environmental Clearance to Development Projects

1727. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 439, given in the Rajya Sabha on the 3rd December, 1999 and state:

(a) What is the number of projects out of those pending for environmental clearance which were sanctioned, rejected or sent back to State Governments, so far for one reason or other during the last three years, particularly concerning Rajasthan and Orissa;

(b) how much time is likely to be taken by Government for clearance of those projects;

(C) whether Government propose to delegate same powers to State Governments in this regard; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS. (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Out of 97 projects covered under EIA/CRZ Notifications which were indicated as pending in reply to Unstarred Question No. 439 answered on 3.12.99, 17 projects were accorded environmental clearance, one was rejected and five were closed as on 30.11.99. With regard to Orissa and Rajasthan, following are the status:

	Orissa	Rajasthan
Number pending as on 31.10.99	3	8
Numer cleared		2
Number closed		1
Number pending as on 30.11.99		5

(b) Decision on granting environmental clearance to individual projects will be taken within 90 days of receipt of complete information.

(c) and (d) State Governments have been delegated powers to grant environmental clearance in respect of certain categories of Thermal Power Projects vide Notification S.O. No.319 (E) dated 10.4.97. Further, the State Governments have been authorised to grant clearance to projects which fall in such Coastal Regulation Zone-II areas which have been taken on record by the Ministry of Environment & Forests at the time of granting approval to the Coastal Zone Management Plan submitted by the State/Union Territories Governments.

Depletion in Forests Cover

1728. SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether it is a fact that forest cover is constantly depleting because of increase in population and India is facing decline in forest cover due to shortfall in per capita forest area;

(b) whether the ecological balance is getting disturbed vastly because of sharp increase in population;

(c) if so, the measures being taken by Government to check the declining trend in bio-diversity; and

(d) if not, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes Sir,

(b) The forest cover in the country has declined from 19.49% to 19.27% during the period 1981—83 to 1993—95. Though no major ecological disturbance has been noticed, National Forest Policy 1988 envisages for 33% of the geographical area under forest/tree cover in the country as the inadequate cover causes soil erosion, land degradation and instability of the fragile eco-system.